

Harry Ring 10 May 1815

(3)

THE
S A I N T S
F R E E D O M

F R O M T H E

Spirit of Bondage;

Briefly Opened and Apply'd,

I N A

S E R M O N

On ROM. VIII. 15.

By G. M.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE
Faithful *in* Christ Jesus:
Grace be Multiplied, &c.

THOUGH the Subject treated on, in the following Discourse, be somewhat uncommon, yet I take it to be of very great Importance.

I have observed many (concerning whom there's Reason to conclude they have really tasted that the Lord is Gracious, and have the Root of the Matter in 'em) do labour under much Darkness and Perplexity, in their own Spirits, about their State and Condition; and

To the Faithful, &c.

are held under Bondage many Tears, for want of a clear Understanding of the Nature of the Spirit of Bondage, and that of Adoption.

If what is here presented to the serious Perusal of the Faithful, may any Way contribute to the Glory of God, and the Establishment, Peace and Comfort of Upright Souls; 'twill be a peculiar Satisfaction to him, who desires to approve himself faithful to God, and serviceable to the Souls of Men, in the Gospel of Christ.

G. M.



T H E



THE
S A I N T S
F R E E D O M
FROM THE
SPIRIT of BONDAGE.

R O M. viii. 15.

For ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.



If you please to look back, and cast your Eyes upon the first Verse of this Chapter, you will find, both the Privilege of Believers asserted, and their Character described.

Their

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Their Privilege asserted ; that's Freedom from Condemnation :

Their Character described, both Negatively and Affirmatively :

Negatively ; *They walk not after the Flesh* : Affirmatively ; *but after the Spirit*. Which Character and Description of those that are in *Christ*, he further prosecutes from Verse the 4th to the 10th, as you may see at your Leisure.

Also in *Ver. 14.* the Apostle mentions another particular Branch of the Privileges of the Children of God ; *viz.* the Conduct of the Divine Spirit : *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*, q. d. To be led by the Divine Spirit, is not only an Evidence that we are the Sons of God ; but this is also the blessed Privilege of all the Children of God : And there's great Occasion for the same ; forasmuch as we cannot see our Way aright, unless the Spirit direct us ; nor have we Strength to walk in it, unless the Spirit assist us.

And as a further Proof, that the People of God are led by the Spirit of God, and are his Children, we are assured, in the
Verse

Verse where my Text is, that this is one of the blessed Effects, and encouraging Influences of the Divine Spirit, to enable them to call God, Father : *Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear : but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.* In which Words we have two Things ; *First*, something Negatively expressed : *Secondly*, something Positively asserted.

First, Something Negatively expressed, viz. That the believing Romans, which is true of all the Faithful, had *not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear.* This supposes that they were once under a *Spirit of Bondage* ; that their Consciences had formerly been terrify'd with Apprehensions of the Wrath of God, due to them for Sin ; that the divine Spirit had set home the Threatnings of the Law upon their Consciences ; shewn them the Danger of their Condition ; discovered the Misery of a lost Estate, and their Liableness to the Wrath and Vengeance of God, and the Flames of Hell. This is what all the Children of God have been under, more or less ; I mean, all those who have been converted to God, when adult or grown up to Years of Understanding : They have been, in some Measure, under a *Spirit of*
Bon-

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Bondage ; under Fears of Hell and Wrath ; under Terrors of Conscience, for the Breach and Violation of the divine Law : But, when once freed from this *Spirit of Bondage*, and blessed with the *Spirit of Adoption*, such do no more return to their former Bondage-State : *Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear,* &c. Moreover,

Secondly, We have here something Positively asserted ; namely, that they had *received the Spirit of Adoption*, which enabled them to call God, Father. They had indeed been under the *Spirit of Bondage*, by the Ministration of the Law, working Fear and Terror in their Consciences ; but now their State was changed, their Natures renewed, and they made Partakers of the *Spirit of Adoption*, and admitted into God's Family : So that, in a peculiar Manner, he will be a *Father unto such, and they shall be his Children*, 2 Cor. vi. 18. By the *Spirit of Adoption*, we are made *Sons* ; and hereupon the heavenly Father bestows upon us the *Spirit of his Son*, Gal. iv. 6. Being adopted into God's Family, he gives a Spirit suitable to the Relation ; and 'tis his Will that we should have a Child-like Disposition.

Adoption

Adoption renders one actually a Son, by Grace, who is no Son by Nature. And by the *Spirit of Adoption* understand a special Grace of the Spirit, certifying our Adoption to us : A Grace which flows from Adoption, and is proper to adopted ones, as serviceable to witness their Adoption ; therefore fitly called the *Spirit of Adoption*, from his Usefulness herein : It likewise implies the Work of the holy Spirit, whereby the Souls of the Faithful are framed to a Child-like Disposition ; one blessed Effect of which is here mentioned in the Text, and that's an Encouragement, and Inclination wrought in us, to have Recourse to God as a Father ; *the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

But 'tis not my Design here to treat of the *Spirit of Adoption*, but of the *Spirit of Bondage* ; or rather, that Believers, who have *received the Spirit of Adoption*, neither do, nor shall receive again the *Spirit of Bondage*. And here we must also note, that the Apostle don't, in this Place, speak of two distinct Spirits, but of one and the same Spirit, under different Denominations. So that the Proposition I shall hence lay down, is this ;

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Doct. *That where the Spirit of God has once been a Spirit of Bondage, and afterwards becomes a Spirit of Adoption, he is never more a Spirit of Bondage to that Soul. Or thus;*

That where God gives his Spirit to a Believer, to be in him, a Spirit of Adoption, he is never afterwards a Spirit of Bondage to that Soul.

In speaking to this Point, I shall, .

I. Enquire what we are here to understand by the *Spirit of Bondage*; and how he comes to be so.

II. Make it evident that where-ever God gives his Spirit to any Believer, to be in him a *Spirit of Adoption*; he is never afterwards a *Spirit of Bondage* to that Soul.

III. Apply the Discourse.

I. Enquire, and shew what we are to understand here by the *Spirit of Bondage*, and how he comes to be so.

For

For Answer,

First, by *Spirit of Bondage*, some understand it to have Respect to the State of Servitude, which the People of God were under, in the Time of the *Levitical Law*; Gal. iv. 3. Even so we, *when we were Children, were in Bondage under the Elements of the World*: And Verse the 9th, *But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggerly Elements, wherewith ye desire again to be in Bondage?*

Secondly, Others think it may have Reference to the Publishing of the Moral Law, upon *Mount Sinai*, which was with Thunder, Lightning, and with great Fear and Horror. Or rather in the

Third Place, It hath Respect to that Horror, and slavish Fear, which the Spirit of God works in the Hearts of Men, by the Ministry of the Law: For the Holy Spirit is not always a *Spirit of Adoption*, in that Soul to whom he comes to take up his Residence: He is first a *Spirit of Bondage*; that is, he does first work upon the Soul, through the Ministry of the Law, by

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Fear and Terror; therefore called a *Spirit of Bondage* working Fear. He sets up the Glass of the Law, opens the Eyes of the Mind, and shews the Soul its Guilt and Pollution, and its fearful Liableness to the Wrath of God: And thus the Soul is brought to a Conviction of its Sin and Misery. This is the first Work of the Spirit, where he comes to convert, and magnify the Power of Grace in the Soul: And from this Work of his in the Heart, by the Law, he is called the *Spirit of Bondage*. And when he has attained this his End, by the Ministry of the Law, then he comes, in the Ministry of the Gospel, to quicken, enliven, and comfort.

The Holy Ghost first shews us our Need of Christ, then draws us unto Christ, and unites us unto him; and from this Union results our Relation: *For we are all the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus*; Gal. iii. 26. And when the Spirit of God has effected this Relation for us, then his next Work is to witness it in us: And from this Operation, he is call'd the *Spirit of Adoption*; because 'tis his Work to effect it, and his Witness to the Work that clears it.

Now,

Now, when once the divine Spirit has effected this for any Soul, he can never after become a *Spirit of Bondage* unto it : *Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear.* I know, indeed, that a Believer, after clear Evidences of the Goodness of his State, and an effectual Change of the Heart, may again be in Bondage of Spirit ; and consequently may be as full of Fears of the Wrath of God, as ever. For the Best upon Earth are encompassed with Temptations unto Sin ; and if any hainous Sin be committed, I may assure you, 'twill make sad Work in a Saint's Conscience : And though he be a Child of God, such Sin will be like the Wind, got into the Caverns of the Earth, that sometimes occasions a dismal Shaking and Earth-quake.

'Tis more than probable, that *David*, after his great Fall, was under as much Fear of Hell and Wrath, as at first Conversion : That Answer of his to *Nathan*, *I have sinned against the Lord*, 2 Sam. xii. 13. together with the Prophet's Message from the Lord, *The Lord hath put away thy Sin*, seems plainly to intimate this : Why should the Prophet apply such a Word, from God, to *David*, had he
not

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not been afraid of miscarrying under the Guilt of unpardoned Sin?

But yet, this I say, that the Spirit of God having once cleared up to us the Goodness of our State, and been, unto us, a *Spirit of Adoption*, he can never be properly a *Spirit of Bondage* any more unto us: And therefore the fore-mentioned Hurries and terrifying Apprehensions, in the Children of God, are not from the Spirit of God as a *Spirit of Bondage*. The Holy Spirit may convince of Sin, and shew unto a gracious Soul the Evil of its own Heart; and hereupon, such an one may, peradventure, come to question his State, and doubt whether ever he felt the Power of the Gospel upon his Soul, or that ever a saving Work of Grace was wrought in him: But a slavish Fear is only carried on, and promoted by the Temptations of Satan, and the Christian's own guilty mis-giving Heart; for the Spirit of God can never become a *Spirit of Bondage* in a sincere Believer again. Which brings us,

II. To evidence this Proposition, *That the Spirit of God can never become a Spirit of Bondage in a Believer: or, That where God has given his Spirit to be a Spirit of Adoption, the divine Spirit is never after-*

afterwards a Spirit of Bondage in that Soul. And this will appear, if you consider,

First, What it is that makes the State of the Soul a State of Bondage. Now, a State of Bondage is made up of three Things ;

1. Conviction of a State of Sin.
2. Conviction of a Liableness to Wrath.
3. Conviction of a Lost Condition.

1. Conviction of a State of Sin. This is one Thing that makes up a *State of Bondage*, when the Spirit of God convinces the Soul that it is in a State of Sin : But now the Spirit of God can never convince any true Believer of his being in a State of Sin. I grant that he may, and does convince such of sinful Acts and Practices ; but never of being in such a sinful State as before Conversion ; because that is not really the State the Believer now is in. The Spirit cannot convince me of being in a State, which in Truth, I am not in. The Spirit of God cannot act an Impostor's Part, and disdains to be the Author of such a Delusion.

What

What is the State that every sound Believer is in? 'Tis certainly a State of Grace; not only Relatively, but Really. He is *passed from Death to Life*; and he is *translated from Darkness to Light*: there's what may sufficiently denominate a new State; and therefore the divine Spirit can never convince any Upright Soul, that he is in his former sinful State.

2. Another Thing that constitutes the Bondage-State, is a Liableness to Wrath and Condemnation, which continues during the Abode of the Soul in a State of Sin.

But the Spirit of God cannot convince a Believer of a Liableness to Condemnation, when he is exempted from such a Liableness. He is, by the Grace of God, freed from it, *John iii. 36. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life*; i. e. he has the Initiation thereof; he is *passed from Death to Life*: And he is freed from Condemnation, *Rom viii. 1. There is therefore now no Condemnation*, i. e. Now, that we believe; *now that we are in Christ Jesus*.

3. Another Thing that constitutes the State of the Soul a *State of Bondage*, is a Conviction

viſion of a loſt Condition, or that the Soul is in a loſt Eſtate. Now the Spirit of God can never convince a Believer, of being in a loſt Condition, when, if a Judgment be paſſed according to Truth, this is not his preſent State ; for the bleſſed Spirit has by his own Act delivered the Believer out of it. Therefore it is evident, that the divine Spirit can never be a *Spirit of Bondage* again, in a Believer, after he has been unto him a *Spirit of Adoption*.

Secondly, This will further appear, if you conſider the Names, and Titles that are given to the Holy Spirit of God, with reſpect to his witneſſing Work in the Souls of his People : He is called a *Seal*, and he is called an *Earneſt*.

1. He is called a Seal. Why a Seal ? but for the Confirmation and Security of our Condition. How long ſhall this Seal abide upon the Heart ? it ſhall never be cancelled, or torn off : *Ye are ſealed to the Day of Redemption*, Eph. iv. 30. q. d. ſo ſealed that ye ſhall carry the Impreſſions of it to Heaven with you. This is one of the Names given to the Holy Spirit, he is called a Seal:

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2. The

2. The Spirit of God is called an Earnest, 2 Cor. i. 22. *Who hath also sealed us, and given the Earnest of the Spirit in our Hearts.* Now an Earnest, What's that, as to the Nature and Use thereof? for to that the Holy Ghost doth here allude: an Earnest, you know, is to bind the Bargain, to make the Contract sure: And can you think, that God will give you an Earnest of Heaven, one Day, and revoke it again the next? Give you an Earnest, one Day, and recall and take it away the next: Besides, he is called the Comforter: 'Tis one of his great Offices under Christ, to be a Comforter: But, how can the Spirit of God be a Comforter to the Faithful, if he brings them again into a *State of Bondage*? Once more,

Thirdly, Another Evidence, that where once the divine Spirit is a *Spirit of Adoption*, he can never be afterwards a *Spirit of Bondage* in the same Soul, is because otherwise the divine Spirit, in such an one, would contradict the Word of God; and we also should hereby injuriously charge the Spirit of God, with doing what would be criminal for us to do.

1. Thus

1. Thus the divine Spirit in such an one would contradict the Word of God. The Word is the great Instrument of the Spirit; and whatever the Spirit does in, or for the Soul, all is accomplished according to the divine established Method, by the Word of God, and always in exact Harmony therewith. Now, the divine Oracles do, every where, adjust the Right of the sincere believing Soul to Heaven, though he has but the least Measure of special Grace. Where there is any true Grace settled in the Heart, the Word does every where vindicate and encourage the same, and speaks Peace and Comfort to the Soul that has it: But should the Spirit of God, be a *Spirit of Bondage*, in a gracious Soul, then the Word and Spirit must of necessity differ in their Testimony; which, to assert, borders on Blasphemy.

2. Hereby we should charge the Spirit of God with doing what would be criminal for us to do: For to question the Truth of Grace in the Soul, after it has been cleared up to us by the Spirit of God, and been made abundantly evident unto us, such a Suspicion would be a sinful Infirmary in us: And thus upon such an Occasion,

Asaph charged himself with Guilt, *Psal.* lxxvii. 7. *Will the Lord cast off for ever : and will he be favourable no more?* Thus you see the good Man in a violent Fit of Temptation, calls all in Question ; and was prone to look upon his State and Condition as extream bad, and hopeless. But in Verse the 10th, you may see how, upon Recollection, he was sensible of an Evil in such Surmises, and frankly acknowledges an Infirmity therein : *I said this is my Infirmity* : 'Twas so, to question the Love of God, and his Interest in the Lord, and to doubt of the Faithfulness of God, because some dark Dispensations of Providence had befallen him. To think that every casting down is a casting off ; this is Folly, as *David* calls it ; *So foolish was I, and ignorant.* Now, dare we charge the Spirit of God with acting what would be criminal for us to do ? By all that has been said, 'tis manifest that where-ever the Spirit of God has been a *Spirit of Adoption*, he can never after become a *Spirit of Bondage* in that Soul. Which is all I shall say on the Doctrinal Part of the Proposition. I proceed,

III. To make some Application.

From

From what has been said, we may perceive how blameable many poor Believers are in this Particular, who, after they have had some clear Discovery of their Interest in Christ (upon Gospel Grounds) and of their Adoption into the Family of God, do give way to Doubts, Fears and Darkeness, questioning their State and Condition, and are ready to draw very disheartning and melancholy Conclusions about it. This ought not so to be, and yet 'tis a very common Thing. It was for the Help and Relief of such, I made choice of this Text, that they might have a Word in Season; and, if God will please to add his Blessing, and say *Amen* to it, 'twill be of Advantage to such serious Christians, who have been, and are labouring under Doubts and Fears about their spiritual State, and upon that Account are held under Bondage and Slavery. I know this Bondage proceeds not always from the same Source and Cause: A Variety of Causes may be assigned; for Instance, briefly,

First, Sometimes 'tis the Fruit of some great Evil committed; 'tis the Effect of some great Sin committed, or Duty neglected.

Every

Every Lust may be truly called a Thief; and, if it gets into the Heart, 'twill attempt to steal whatever it can lay its Hands on; and especially, in the first Place, 'twill endeavour to filch away your Evidences for Heaven.

Secondly, Sometimes the *Bondage* Persons are under, is the Fruit of a very strong Temptation from Satan, who has an envious restless Design against the Believer's Evidences. He knows that the Destruction of a sincere Christian's Grace is out of his Reach; but though he cannot change a Believer's State, he labours to extinguish his Comforts by darkning his Evidence: And when a Man's Evidence is lost, his all, as to present Peace and Comfort, is lost and gone.

Thirdly, Sometimes this proceeds from a seeming Humility. Many Christians think that always to doubt and question their State, is what speaks them to be very humble and lowly; and that 'tis a very necessary Self-denial.

But let it proceed from what Cause it will, the Thing in it self is a very great Evil, when it prevails among the Children of God:

God : For 'tis very unbecoming the Relation Believers stand in to God, and a great Slight thrown upon the blessed Privilege and Happiness of that State : I must therefore put such in Mind of two or three Particulars.

1. A special State of Grace now once entred into, is durable and abiding ; it can never be lost. *Adam* fell out of a State of Grace ; but no Man in Christ ever did : such an one shall not, cannot thus fall. He has Grace as an abiding, incorruptible Seed ; and where-ever Grace is once wrought, and planted in the Soul, it shall never perish, nor be rooted up.

2. Know, that these Doubts and anxious sinking Fears, in the Faithful, about their spiritual State, after they have had some satisfactory Evidence of a Work of Grace in them, should be censur'd as an Impeachment of the Word of God, and what does seem to give the Lye to the divine Spirit, which affords us all possible Security that, where-ever God has once begun a *Work of Grace, he will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ*, Phil. i. 6. Once more,

3. Know

3. Know this, that if the Grace of God has been really wrought in, and well evidenced to thy Soul, 'tis impossible that ever thou shouldest have the like Reason to deny this good Work, as thou hast to be satisfy'd with it. Let this be seriously thought of, that a Man, who thus concludes against his State, don't judge upon the like Evidence, as that is from whence his Satisfaction springs: Now to judge either without Evidence, or upon false Evidence (as is such an one's Case) this is a wrong way of Procedure, and causes an unjust Judgment. He who has had an authentick Witness of the Grace of God in his Heart, can never have the like against it. Well then, have you ever felt the Power and Efficacy of divine Grace within the Heart? has the Reality of a saving Change ever been plainly evidenced unto you? and have you had good Reason to conclude that the Spirit of God has given his Testimony to the Goodness of your State? If so, there cannot afterwards be any just Ground to deny it; for there can be no such Evidence to confute it, as there has been to confirm it. The Testimony of a Man's own Spirit is fluttering and variable; 'tis often *Pro* and *Con*, for and against; but the Witness of God's own Spirit,

Spirit is steady, and not wavering : He is the Spirit of Truth ; and therefore his Testimony is firm, and ought to be rested in. So that if a Man has ever attained to this, *viz.* to a sure and solid Evidence of the Grace of God in his own Soul, it ought never to be disowned again ; and there's a cogent Reason for this ; because, as a Believer can never alter his State, so the Spirit of God can never vary his Testimony by a Witness different from what he gave before, and a fresh Testimony, contrary to what the Christian's real State is. It's true, he's not obliged always to give to a Believer a comfortable Knowledge of this Testimony ; he may let him have it at one Time, and not at another ; but yet the Holy Ghost can never so vary his Witness as, at any Time, to give in a Testimony contradictory to Truth, and opposite to what he before witnessed to the gracious Soul. When he does bear Witness 'twill always be consistent with Truth. This Witness may often be suspended, but can never be contradicted by the same Spirit.

I grant that the Spirit of God may, in some Cases, witness against a Believer ; *i. e.* against his Life, Carriage, and unseemly Course sometimes ; and against any un-

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suitable Frame of his Heart ; but he can never witness against his State ; because, having once born Witness to it, he can never deny himself. From all which 'tis plain, that they who have *received the Spirit of Adoption*, and have, at certain Times, had the holy Spirit witnessing to the Truth and Reality of a Work of Grace in their Souls, are greatly to blame to give way to slavish Doubts and Fears, as to their spiritual Estate. And therefore let me in the

Second Place, Exhort you that are Believers, who have had the Spirit of God witnessing to the Truth of a Work of Grace in you, and to the Goodness of your State, never to doubt, or question this any more. For pray consider,

1. That thus to do would be a great Mischief to our Souls, and turn to our Damage every way : 'Twould be of great Disadvantage to the Soul in a Way of Duty, and tend to enervate all our Endeavours therein. A Man never acts so vigorously in a Course of Obedience, as when he acts chearfully ; and he never acts so chearfully, as when he acts in the Vigour of Hope and Assurance: *He that has this Hope purifies himself* ; 1 John iii. 3. which signi-

signifies the mighty Efficacy of this Hope, as it causes restless Endeavours, and will make us strive to come up to as near a Resemblance to our great Pattern and Example, the Lord Jesus Christ, as possible. He who has this Hope labours that he may come up to an higher Measure of Grace and Holiness: He would fain have his Holiness rise up to the Degree of his Hope: As if he should say, I have good Hope, through Grace, that I belong to God; my hearty Desire is, that I may be more like unto him: I share in much of the divine Goodness; O that I might partake more of the divine Nature! Hereby it is that the *inward Man is renewed Day by Day, and changed from Glory to Glory.* But as for Doubts and Denials of a Work of Grace in the Heart, these do generally work quite contrary Effects; they bring the Soul into fainting Fits, and then there's little or no Strength for Work: You know it is so. Again,

2. Consider, that where a Man denies the Work of divine Grace in himself, after he has had a good Evidence thereof, 'tis the Fruit of an unseasonable Judgment which the Soul passes upon it self.

Sirs, Ye must know, that all Times are not proper or seasonable for a Believer to meddle with his own spiritual State, so as to pass a peremptory Judgment thereof. There be some Times whercin, if a Man sets himself to judge of his State, 'twill be sure to go against him.

For Instance, in one among many; when a Man, through Temptation, has been drawn into some great Miscarriage or Lapse into Sin, which is too often the Case of God's own Children; when they do thus trespass, they do hereby much provoke the divine Spirit to withdraw from them: And when it is thus, 'tis a very unseasonable Time for you to judge your State in; and therefore 'tis not then your proper Duty: 'Tis not what God does peculiarly call you to, at that Time: no, he has appointed another, and more proper Work and Duty for you at such a Time; and that is (in the midst of your just Remorse, and self Abasement) to look upward more than inward; to be more in direct Acts of Faith, and less in the reflex Acts. It is the standing Counsel of God, when a Soul is under Darknes and Temptation, *Isa. l. 10 Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, that walk-*
eth

eth in Darkneſs, and hath no Light? Let him truſt in the Name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God. Pray mind it; 'tis an excellent Order, and Directory; and there are three Things in it worthy of Remark:

1. To whom it is given; 'Tis to true Fearers of God; who are deſcribed here both by their Property and outward Character, *fearing and obeying; fearing the Lord, and obeying the Voice of his Servant:* Theſe are the Perſons.

2. We have the Condition and Circumſtance of theſe Perſons mentioned; (and that's very ſad) *they walk in Darkneſs, and have no Light.* A dark Condition is very ſad; but Darkneſs, and no Light, that's abundantly more ſad and doleful. I gather hence, that a Man may really be in a State of Grace, and yet not have the leaſt Sight or Senſe of it: He may walk with God in Obedience, and yet walk in Darkneſs: He may walk in the Light of the Precept, and yet ſee no Light in the Promiſe; nor have the *ſhining of the Face of God*; and ſo may walk ſafely, though he don't walk comfortably. Well but,

3. What's

3. What's the Duty of such? Why, not Reflection, but Recumbence; not judging the State, but acting a resolute Trust: *Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

There are four useful Truths pointed out to us from these Words, or may be inferred from 'em.

(1.) That a Believer has a Propriety in God when he has no Prospect; *i. e.* as much when he cannot see God, as when he can: *Let him stay upon his God.* 'Tis his God, even then when he walks in Darknes: *Let him stay upon his God.* When the Believer is in his greatest Darknes, and deepest Plunges, the Lord is then his God.

(2.) This teaches us that Darknes may extinguish Manifestation, but not Affection; it may hinder present Discovery, but not weaken Propriety; it may obstruct Vision, but not Union: 'Tis his God still.

(3.) We may learn thus much, that Desertion and Temptation will certainly sink us, if Faith in God don't support us. The only way for the Christian to prevent falling

ling is to stay upon his God ; as *Job* said,
Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.
When a Believer loseth his Evidence, 'tis
his Work then to hang upon the divine
Attributes, as they are gloriously display'd
in and through the Messiah: This I take
to be meant by *the Name of the Lord.*

(4.) *And Lastly,* We may learn hence;
that a Believer may have Light for one Du-
ty, when he has none for another: He may
not, perhaps, have Light to judge his
State, when he may have Light to direct
his Path: He may not have Light sufficient
to try his State, when he has Light e-
nough for the Exercise of Grace. God ne-
ver brings his People into such Darkness,
but they have Light sufficient for their pre-
sent Duty, which is not then so much Scrui-
tiny as Recumbency; not to judge their
State, but to act their Faith; *Trusting in*
the Name of the Lord, and staying upon
their God.

To conclude, upon the Whole, Let me be-
seech poor dark doubting Souls to consi-
der, and seriously to think upon what has
been said from this Text and Doctrine, *viz.*
That where-ever the Spirit of God is be-
come a Spirit of Adoption, he is never af-
terwards a Spirit of Bondage in that Soul:
And

And that where Persons have had the Witness and Testimony of the Spirit, evidencing a Change of State, and that their Natures are renewed, such ought never more to give way to discouraging Doubts of their Interest in Christ, and the great Blessing of divine Adoption. Go your Way therefore, and pray over these Things, and labour to act and exercise your Faith upon them, and be fully perswaded of the Truths here delivered: That if you have received the Spirit of Adoption, the Spirit of God will never more be in you a Spirit of Bondage: And that if you have had the clear Testimony of the divine Spirit, witnessing to a Work of Grace in your Souls, it is a very great Evil for you afterwards to question the Truth of it.

F I N I S.

